April 4, 2019

Dear President Trump, Vice President Pence, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

We are a diverse group of advocates for religious liberty for all. We sometimes differ about what religious freedom requires, but we are united around the bedrock principle of ensuring that all individuals and communities are able to exercise their faith in safety and security. We write to ask you to take action to uphold this principle.

We are grieving over the most recent heinous attacks on houses of worship. The March 15th attack on two mosques in New Zealand during Friday prayer killed fifty Muslims and injured fifty more. In the weeks since, an assailant stabbed a Catholic priest in a Montreal church during Mass, and a California mosque was set on fire and vandalized with graffiti referencing the New Zealand attacks. Moreover, to our alarm, in the aftermath of the New Zealand attacks we have seen the Jewish community falsely accused as somehow being responsible for those attacks—rhetoric that further endangers that community as well.

As you know, other houses of worship have also been targeted for unspeakable violence in recent years. In the United States, these attacks include ones on Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek; Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina; Dar Al-Faroor Islamic Center in Bloomington, Minnesota; First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs, Texas; and Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The words we use matter greatly, especially the words of our leaders. In 1790, President George Washington wrote a letter to the members of Touro Synagogue, insisting that the government of the United States must give “to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance. . . .” All Americans should be able to “sit in safety under [their] own vine[s] and figtree[s],” with “none to make [them] afraid,” Washington said.

We ask you to uphold these principles. As governmental leaders, you have a special duty to ensure that your words comport with the spirit of the Constitution and help to unify, strengthen and keep Americans safe.

Accordingly, we ask you to affirm the following principles in coming days:

- Individuals of all faiths and none have equal dignity, worth and rights to religious freedom.

- A person is not more or less American because of his or her faith. People of all faiths and none are equal and make outstanding contributions to the United States.

- Individuals must be able to exercise their religion, including attending their houses of worship and practicing their faith in the public square, without fear for their physical safety.
• Scapegoating, stereotyping and spreading false information about any person or community, including religious individuals and communities, is unacceptable.

• Americans should never foment fear about groups based on attributes like religion, race or ethnicity, and they should speak against fear-mongering by others.

• The civic and religious virtue of humble dialogue with those with whom one disagrees should be encouraged.

• Leaders should avoid using violent imagery because it can encourage violence, especially among those who are so inclined and those who are impressionable.

• An attack on one religion should be treated as an attack on every faith. As the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

We hope you will devote specific remarks to these principles in the days ahead. We vow to work with you to ensure that individuals and communities are able to practice their faith without fear.

Sincerely,

William Aiken
President, Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington
Washington, D.C.

Bishop Claude Alexander
The Park Church
Charlotte, North Carolina

Leith Anderson
President
National Association of Evangelicals

Marge Baker
Executive Vice President for Policy and Program
People for the American Way Foundation

Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore
Global Alliance Interfaith Networks

Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera
Bishop of Scranton
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs
Jenna Baron  
Executive Director  
Alliance for Refugee Youth Support & Education  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Rev. Dr. James E. Baucom, Jr.  
Senior Pastor  
Columbia Baptist Church  
Falls Church, Virginia

Thomas C. Berg  
James L. Oberstar Professor of Law and Public Policy  
University of St. Thomas School of Law (Minnesota)

Anju Bhargava  
Founder  
Hindu American Seva Communities

Rev. Dr. Steve Bland  
Michigan Baptist Association  
Detroit, Michigan

Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi  
President  
Buddhist Association of the United States

Rev. Brendolyn Boseman  
African American Ministers Leadership Council  
Augusta, Georgia

J. Mark Brinkmoeller  
Vice President, International Interfaith Peace Corps  
Former Director, USAID Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio  
Archbishop for the Military Services, USA  
Chairman, USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace

Rev. Paul Bush  
Concerned Clergy Fellowship  
Aiken, South Carolina

Rev. Jennifer Butler  
Chief Executive Officer  
Faith in Public Life
Rev. Bruce A. Cameron  
Retired Lutheran Minister (LCMS)  
St. Louis, Missouri

Sister Simone Campbell  
Executive Director  
NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice

Galen Carey  
Vice President for Government Relations  
National Association of Evangelicals

Dr. John D. Carlson  
Associate Professor of Religious Studies and  
Interim Director, Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict  
Arizona State University

Angela Carmella  
Professor  
Seton Hall University School of Law

Patrick Carolan  
Executive Director  
Franciscan Action Network

Rev. David B. Carver  
First United Presbyterian Church of Crafton Heights  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Rev. Dorothy Chaney  
VASHTI Women of Faith  
Miami, Florida

Bishop Harry Chaney  
MICAH Leadership Council  
Cairo, Georgia

Dr. Arturo Chavez  
President  
Mexican American Catholic College

Rev. Dr. Michael Couch  
MICAH Leadership Council  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Rev. Dr. Jill Y. Crainshaw
Interim Dean
Blackburn Professor of Worship and Liturgical Theology
Wake Forest University School of Divinity

Rev. Alan Cross
Southern Baptist Convention Minister
Writer/Author, Missional Strategist, Baptist Association of Montgomery, Alabama

Rev. Dr. Chuck Currie
Director, Center for Peace and Spirituality
University Chaplain
Pacific University

Rev. Fred Davie
Executive Vice-President
Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York

Rev. Delisha Davis
MICAH Leadership Council
Alexandria, Virginia

Dr. David DeCosse
Santa Clara University
Co-editor, *Conscience and Catholicism: Rights, Responsibilities, and Institutional Responses* (Orbis 2015)

Dr. Sabrina E. Dent
Director of Programs and Partnerships
Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum Institute

Dr. Miguel Diaz
U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See (ret.)
John Courtney Murray University Chair in Public Service
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. John DiIulio
Frederic Fox Leadership Professor of Politics, Religion, and Civil Society
University of Pennsylvania
Former Director, White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives

Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas
Dean
Episcopal Divinity School at Union
Rev. Dr. Pam Durso
Executive Director
Baptist Women in Ministry
Atlanta, Georgia

Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin
Bishop
Southwest California Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Kristen Farrington
Executive Director
Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum Institute

Todd Fetters, Bishop
Church of the United Brethren in Christ

Richard T. Foltin
Senior Scholar
Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum Institute

Dr. Curtis W. Freeman
Research Professor of Theology
Director of the Baptist House of Studies
Duke University School of Divinity

Dr. Nicole Baker Fulgham
President
The Expectations Project

Rev. Dr. Willie Gable
Interfaith Ministers Alliance
New Orleans, Louisiana

Richard W. Garnett
Paul J. Schierl / Fort Howard Corporation Professor of Law
Director, Notre Dame Program on Church, State & Society
Concurrent Professor of Political Science
University of Notre Dame

Dr. Robert P. George
McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence
Director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions
Princeton University
Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
General Secretary Emeritus
Reformed Church in America

Dr. Steven Green
Fred H. Paulus Professor of Law
Director of the Center for Religion, Law & Democracy
Willamette University School of Law

Jonathan A. Greenblatt
Chief Executive Officer and National Director
Anti-Defamation League

Dr. R. Marie Griffith
John C. Danforth Distinguished Professor in the Humanities
Director, John C. Danforth Center on Religion and Politics
Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri

Anjleen Kaur Gumer
Executive Director
National Sikh Campaign

Rev. Dr. David P. Gushee
Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics
Director, Center for Theology & Public Life, Mercer University
Immediate Past President, American Academy of Religion &
Society of Christian Ethics

Ken Hackett
U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See (ret.)
President and CEO of Catholic Relief Services (ret.)

Iftekhar A. Hai
President
UMA Interfaith Alliance

Rev. Cynthia L. Hale
Senior Pastor
Ray of Hope Christian Church
Decatur, Georgia

Diana Bate Hardy
Executive Director and Co-founder
Mormon Women for Ethical Government
Elder Lee Harris  
African American Ministers Leadership Council  
Jacksonville, Florida

Hoda Hawa  
Director, Washington, D.C. Office  
Muslim Public Affairs Council

Rev. Jennifer Hawks  
Associate General Counsel  
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

Dr. Charles C. Haynes  
Founding Director  
Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum Institute

Rev. Dr. Katharine Rhodes Henderson  
President  
Auburn Seminary

Dr. Dennis P. Hollinger  
President & Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics  
Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary

Shirley V. Hoogstra, J.D.  
President  
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

Rev. Amiri Hooker  
MICAH Leadership Council  
Columbia, South Carolina

Pastor Carolyn Hurst, MD  
Seventh-day Adventist  
Cleveland, Ohio

Pastor Jerome Hurst  
Seventh-day Adventist  
Cleveland, Ohio

Dr. Amir Hussain  
Professor of Theological Studies  
Loyola Marymount University
Dr. Trung Huynh  
Enlightened Buddha Temple  
Sugar Land, Texas

Rev. Charles Foster Johnson  
Pastor, Bread Fellowship, Fort Worth, Texas  
Executive Director, Pastors for Texas Children

Rev. Louis Jones, II  
Washington, D.C.

Rev. Dr. Serene Jones  
President  
Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York

Pardeep Singh Kaleka  
Board of Trustees, Sikh Temple of Wisconsin  
Co-Founder, Serve 2 Unite

Bishop Lawrence Kirby  
Racine, Wisconsin

Douglas W. Kmiec  
Professor of Constitutional Law & Human Rights  
Ambassador of the United States (ret.)

Steven A. Krueger  
Catholic Social Justice Advocate  
Boston, Massachusetts

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.  
Archbishop of Louisville  
Chairman, USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty

Rev. William H. Lamar IV  
Pastor  
Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church  
Washington, D.C.

Rachel Laser  
Executive Director  
Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Jason Lemieux  
Director of Government Affairs  
Center for Inquiry
Skip L’Heureux  
Executive Director Emeritus  
Queens Federation of Churches

Shapri D. LoMaglio, J.D.  
Senior Vice President for Government & External Relations  
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities

Jacob Lupfer  
Committee on Religious Liberty

Rev. Jo Anne Lyon  
Ambassador  
General Superintendent Emerita  
The Wesleyan Church

Daniel Mach  
Director  
ACLU Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief

Rev. Carlos L. Malavé  
Executive Director  
Christian Churches Together

Benjamin Pietro Marcus  
Religious Literacy Specialist  
Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum Institute

Rev. Dr. George A. Mason  
Senior Pastor  
Wilshire Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas  
President, Faith Commons

Rev. Isaac McCullough  
Jacksonville, Florida

Rev. Timothy McDonald  
First Iconium Baptist Church  
Atlanta, Georgia

Nipun Mehta  
Founder, ServiceSpace

Arno Arr Michaelis IV  
Director, Serve 2 Unite  
Co-Author, The Gift of Our Wounds
Dr. Vincent J. Miller  
Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture  
University of Dayton

Elliot Mincberg  
People for the American Way Foundation

Jack Moline  
President  
Interfaith Alliance

Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, Jr.  
Pastor Emeritus  
Olivet Institutional Baptist Church  
Cleveland, Ohio

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy  
Executive Director  
Catholic Mobilizing Network

Rev. Rich Nathan  
Senior Pastor  
Vineyard Columbus, Columbus, Ohio

Carl Nelson  
President, Transform Minnesota: the evangelical network

The Honorable Thomas P. O’Neill III  
Chief Executive Officer  
O’Neill And Associates

Dr. Aristotle "Telly" Papanikolaou  
Professor of Theology  
Archbishop Demetrios Chair in Orthodox Theology and Culture  
Co-founding Director, Orthodox Christian Studies Center  
Fordham University

Suzii Paynter  
Co-Director  
Pastors for Texas Children

Rev. Julie Pennington-Russell  
Pastor  
First Baptist Church of the City of Washington, D.C.
Rabbi Jonah Pesner  
Director  
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Dr. Daniel Philpott  
Professor of Political Science  
University of Notre Dame

John D. Pierce  
Executive Editor/Publisher  
Nurturing Faith Publishing

Dr. Soong-Chan Rah  
Milton B. Engebretson Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism  
North Park Theological Seminary

Shahid Rahman  
Executive Director  
American Muslim Institution

Curtis Ramsey-Lucas  
Editor, The Christian Citizen  
American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Rev. Dr. R. Mitch Randall  
Executive Director  
Ethics Daily

Nancy Ratzan  
Former President  
National Council of Jewish Women

Stephen Reeves  
Associate Coordinator of Partnerships & Advocacy  
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

Melissa Rogers  
Visiting Professor, Wake Forest University School of Divinity  
Former Director, White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

James Roosevelt, Jr.  
Catholic Health Care Advocate  
Boston, Massachusetts
Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero
President
National Association of Latino Evangelicals

Rev. Alexia Salvatierra
Faith-Rooted Organizing UnNetwork

Rabbi David N. Saperstein
U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom (ret.)

Brett G. Scharffs
Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law
Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies
Brigham Young University School of Law

Dr. Stephen Schneck
Retired Director, Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies
The Catholic University of America

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld
Chief Executive Officer
The Rabbinical Assembly

Dr. Timothy Samuel Shah
Senior Fellow and Director of the South and Southeast Asia Action Team, Religious Freedom Institute
Non-resident Research Professor of Government at Baylor University’s Institute for Studies of Religion

Rev. Dr. Robert Shine
African American Ministers Leadership Council
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Suhag Shukla, Esq.
Executive Director
Hindu American Foundation

Ambassador Islam Siddiqui
President
American Muslim Institution

Dr. Ronald J. Sider
Distinguished Professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry and Public Policy
Palmer Seminary at Eastern University
Rev. Dr. Susan Smith  
African American Ministers Leadership Council  
Columbus, Ohio

Stephanie Summers  
Chief Executive Officer  
Center for Public Justice

Sayyid Syeed  
President  
Islamic Society of North America

Dr. Matthew A. Tapie  
Assistant Professor of Theology  
Director, Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies  
Saint Leo University, Florida

Amanda Tyler  
Executive Director  
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

Asma Uddin  
Senior Scholar  
Religious Freedom Center of the Freedom Forum Institute

Dr. Corey D. B. Walker  
Visiting Professor  
University of Richmond  
Freedom Forum Institute Senior Fellow for Religious Freedom

Rev. Jim Wallis  
Founder and President  
Sojourners

Colin P. Watson, Sr.  
Director of Ministries and Administration  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Michael Wear  
Chief Strategist  
The AND Campaign

Debbie Weinstein  
Coalition on Human Needs
J. Patrick Whelan, MD PhD
Academic Advisory Council
Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at University of Southern California

Rev. Dr. Cathy Williams
VASHTI Women of Faith
Raleigh, North Carolina

Rev. Merchuria Chase Williams, PhD
African American Leadership Council
Atlanta, Georgia

Rev. Leslie Marie Wilson
Director
African American Ministers Leadership Council
Waldorf, Maryland

Rev. Melvin Wilson
St. Matthew AME Church
Orange, New Jersey

Rev. Dr. Nancy Wilson
Metropolitan Community Churches

Rev. Patrick Young
Mobilizing Preachers and Community (MPAC) New York
E. Elmhurst, New York

* Titles and organizational affiliations listed for informational purposes only